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THE PRINCIPLES OF THE REFORMATION.

NO. II.

DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

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PRINCIPLES OF THE REFORMATION.

NO. II.—DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

At my ordination, by HENRY Bishop of Exeter, I solemnly promised to maintain, as much as lieth in me, quietness, peace and love among all Christian people. But I made also another promise: to be ready with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines. In these two promises, I have seen somewhat of a "divided duty;" and the result has been, that I have not cared to publish sermons on doctrine, preached in Holy Trinity Church.

But the time has now come, when, in consequence of a slanderous attack made on us, I have resolved to publish, on my own responsibility alone, the substance of my teaching, in order that our Canadian Churchmen may judge for themselves whether we are unfaithful to the pure and reformed Branch of the Universal Church. I shall select such topics as are in dispute; and if I do not publish the whole of what I have taught, I hope my fellow Christians of the Church Association and of the *Christian Guardian*, will believe me when I say, that the cost is the only reason. I am willing to submit my whole teaching to the judgment of a competent tribunal, and if I am publicly convicted of teaching anything contrary to God's Holy Word, *as interpreted in the Prayer Book*, I am ready to resign my office. Let us begin with one disputed doctrine, that of Election. In October, 1870, I taught our people from Romans viii. 30. I said the faults of bitterness, and narrow-minded spiritual pride, belong to all schools of religious thought among us, and *more especially* to the Calvinistic school. But as all Christians believe a doctrine of Election, the question resolves itself into another: viz. what is the meaning of Election? Now, there are three theories upon it.

1st. Calvinism. The doctrine of CALVIN is, that from all eternity, God has predestinated a certain fixed number, irrespective of them or anything in them, to final salvation, and that all others are either predestinated to damnation, or at least so left out of God's decree that they must perish.

2nd. Arminianism. From all eternity, God predestined a certain fixed number to glory : but the decree is not arbitrary : it is the consequence of God's foreknowledge that those so decreed will make a good use of the grace given. We note carefully, that in both schemes the Election is to Life Everlasting.

But our Branch of the Church Universal holds neither scheme. She embraces the

3rd Theory, called by Divines, Ecclesiastical Election. As were the Jews of old, so now is the Christian Church, God's chosen ; this choosing being from God's decree alone. The Election is to *privileges and great blessings*, not to final glory or misery. When we look at our 17th Article of Religion, we are struck with the ingenious hair-splitting which enables both sides to sign it. First it gives the meaning of predestination ; then a description of those so called ; then the comfort arising from the *godly* consideration of the doctrine ; then the danger arising from its improper use ; (a *very great danger*, as I know from my own experience as a Priest,) and lastly the duty of attending to the will of God as He has revealed it. I said there was ingenious hair-splitting here ; but our learned Chief Justice must be aware, that in Queen Elizabeth's reign the Calvinistic divines, not being satisfied with the Article as it stands, were anxious to substitute the more express language of the Lambeth Articles. But when we turn to the Baptismal Offices, all doubt vanishes ; and no honest man can say that our Branch leaves this an open question. The Calvinist *cannot honestly* use our Office, because it teaches that *all infants* are born again. Nor do I wonder, however much I grieve, that the Catechism is lightly regarded in some of our Sunday Schools in the city, which profess to belong to our Branch. To the Calvinist, it is gall and bitterness to be obliged to teach *every* baptized child, that God sanctifieth him (present time) and all the elect people of God.

But this terrible doctrine is said to have its origin in the writings of no less a man than S. Augustine. When a disciple, however, is not content to be as his Master, we are bound to fall back on the teaching of that Master, who on one occasion *was much displeased*. (Mark x. 14.) Can any one deny, that at the

Reformation, both Luther and Melancthon abandoned certain views of absolute predestination? It was reserved for Calvin, then, a man of logical mind and great intellect, to take up the imputed views of S. Augustine. Advancing far beyond the views of his master, he taught that which is nothing less than blasphemy, as well as heresy.

But manifestly there is a theory of Election in Holy Scripture. The master mind of SHAKESPERE teaches that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy: and when we carry our philosophy into these things, we soon find our limit. Why does God permit sin to exist? Why suffers the child in this life for the sins of the parent? Scripture imperfectly answers these things: for all we learn at present is, that God wills us to remain unsatisfied. Turning to the Old Testament, we learn, that the seed of Abraham are spoken of as God's Elect. And seeking the *ground* of their election, and to *what* they were elected, we find the ground to be, not foreseen faith, as ARMINIUS would say, but simply God's good pleasure. The Lord had a delight in their fathers, to love them, and chose their seed after them above all people.

And as to the important question, which concerns us practically, to *what* the Election was, we can never presume to say they were all elected to unfailing salvation. We believe and teach, that they were placed *on the road to heaven*—i. e. in a *state of salvation*, as our Catechism teaches. The Election was to a blessing, not of *absolute possession*, but the blessing of privilege.

But an ingenious objection of a doubting and protesting frame of mind may affirm, that if one person be destined to privileges, and another shut out from them, it is the same in effect as saying, that the one is predestinated to salvation, and the other to damnation.

This is a fair sample of human reasoning. How can you prove that privilege *must* lead to salvation, and absence of privilege to the reverse? In the olden time, the Jew was more favoured than the Gentile: but the question is not what our idea of justice may be, but what the Holy Book reveals. We see the same in God's ordinary providence. Why are some born of parents whose chief idea is the good of their offspring in this life and the next? Why do some parents shamefully entreat their children? Why are some born amid heathen darkness? You can have no answer, except that such is the will of God. I cannot venture to fathom His secrets, but *I feel, I feel* He must be right;

blessed be His holy name. And when we turn to the New Covenant, we remember that although all the Apostles were Jews, they had to proclaim, that the Jewish Church, as that of a single nation, had passed away. They had to explain the new conditions : having received indeed a new revelation, that now it is God's purpose to bring all men into the Church of Christ. I affirm, and strongly protest, that on this ground alone can we account for the language of the Apostles. Constant comparison is made between the state of the Jews and that of the Christians. The Jews are constantly spoken of as God's chosen people ; and in consequence, S. Paul begins most of his Epistles by calling the Christian Church to which he wrote either *holy*, or *called*, or *elect*. Then S. Peter addresses the *whole Christian Church* as a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people.

It is affirmed, that S. Paul's language, in writing to the Romans, viii. 29, is not agreeable to this. Let us examine. His purpose was to prove to the Jews, that though they were God's chosen *for a time*, yet now He has chosen a universal Church, to be His people in Christ, the seed of Abraham. Both Jews and Gentiles are guilty before G^d, and so all need a Redeemer. Again, we have to bear in mind, that the Scripture often says things are done which God desires *should* be done. Thus all members of the visible Church are called saints, because God designs them so to be. Christ is called by S. John, the Saviour of the *world*, because He desires all to be saved. He hath done all that can be expected on His part, and yet will not force men to be saved against their will. This is the reason why S. Paul speaks of our salvation *as a thing done* : "*We were saved*," he says, i. e. on God's part. We most willingly and confidently assert, therefore, that God pleases to predestinate *every man* to eternal salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord. We are far from being able to think, that every man will attain final salvation ; but the failing must be, not on God's part, but on ours. This Epistle is written to console and cheer the Roman Christians, especially those of Jewish birth : but it would be no *encouragement* to say, that God had only called an *unknown few* among them. Our very souls are harrowed up, when preachers of the Church of England talk such fearful heresy, and then dare to call the Gospel, the *good news*!! Why, the main drift of all this Epistle, is to tear up, root and branch, any such notion from the mind of the Jews. S. Paul proves, that all *are under sin, all need a Saviour, and that Saviour died for all*.

I will content myself with alluding briefly to two other


passages which have been twisted by Calvinistic teachers to the peril of their hearers. At the end of the second chapter of the Acts of Apostles, S. Luke says, "the Lord added to the Church daily such as *should* be saved;" or, as three MSS., the Sinaitic, the Vatican, and the Alexandrine have it, "added together daily such as were saved." On this text the learned Archbishop LAURENCE long ago remarked, that the Greek writer uses the only tense or time which *must exclude* the Calvinistic perversion, viz. the present participle, "those who are being saved." They are being placed in the state of salvation, and on the road to heaven, but their will is free nevertheless.

The other passage is as follows. When S. Paul and S. Barnabas came to Antioch in Pisidia, they attended, as was their custom, the synagogue worship on our Saturday; and as they were strangers, the rulers of the synagogue requested them to address the people. Thereupon S. Paul spake in such a way, that, though the Jews were offended (they were by anticipation Calvinists) the Gentiles begged to hear more in the week between, or on the following Jewish Sabbath (for the expression is doubtful); and so great was the commotion, that on the following Saturday, nearly the whole city-full came to hear. Let us suppose, that some Chief Rabbi, or *Justice*, had charged him with being a traitor. And when the Jews saw this multitude (I imagine there were no pew-rents in that synagogue), they grew full of envy and blasphemy. Then S. Paul and S. Barnabas, told the Jews, that as they *judged themselves unworthy of life everlasting*, they (the Apostles) would turn to the Gentiles, who then rejoiced, and glorified God; and as many as were *ordered*, or *ordained*, or *set in order*, by grace and God's word, at the mouth of S. Paul, *believed*, and made open profession of their faith in the Gospel. Yes, yes, let us thank God, that the original words are so happily chosen (if we may so venture to say) as to anticipate and provide against this awful Calvinistic perversion: for they have what is called in grammar, both a passive and a middle sense; setting forth on the one hand, the working of God's grace, and on the other hand, the working therewith of the human will. We are unable to express in English this nicety of meaning in the same word. The Jews were thrusting away the Word from themselves, and were *disordered* unto life everlasting; while the Gentiles were *set in order* by God, and were *setting themselves in order*, through the preaching of S. Paul. Whether all those who received the Word, and set themselves on the road to heaven, shall finally attain the heavenly

mansions, I for one am not called on to judge: even the self-sufficient men, who have now come forward to warn our brethren against me, will hardly venture to judge.

Nor can any clergy or laity say, that this doctrine is a matter remote from daily life. In the important matter of education, I remember once complaining to a father of the Puritan school, that his son, my pupil, was a very confirmed liar. The father said, "We have not all the same grace: let us not punish him, but wait till God is pleased to convert him." It is just by these extreme cases, that we become alive to the dangers of a system. Be it our consolation, however, that as on the one hand we daily grieve over our falling off from the lofty standard of Christ, so on the other hand, many well-meaning, but badly-taught Calvinists, *live better* than their miserable creed: they do not believe their children are Christians, (unless they hear a lot of miserable canting rubbish, poured forth by youthful lips, to please the parents) but still *bring them up as if they were already Christians*. Thank God, in that He hath planted in the parental heart, something stronger than even the vile teaching of this arch-heretic.

I do not dare to hope, that in my time our miserable divisions within the Church of England will be healed; but I do indeed venture to hope (and see signs to), that this one great cause of strife may be driven away. The Calvinistic party is fast dying out at home and in the States. By their own admission, they cannot as a party muster one-fourth of the Clergy in England. Many leading men of that party have abandoned their ministry in the Church of England, and openly joined some other communion. But we have no such prospect here. The course pursued by Bishop CUMMINS, in the United States, seems destined to be a failure, as far as we can see at present; for very few clergy have thought fit to join him. I hope and trust, that the present controversy into which we are now compelled most reluctantly to enter, may issue in a fresh awakening to life in the members of our "beloved Church,"—to use the language of this new Association,—language in their mouths painfully inappropriate. If this, my humble contribution to the study of the real principles of the English Reformation, be only moderately successful in driving away this erroneous and strange doctrine, I shall thank God, and take courage to put forth further publications of the same kind.

 *Principles of the Reformation, No. 3*, will be on "The Church, what is it?"